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## Testimony of the National Association of Flood and Stormwater Management Agencies

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Hearing on Fiscal Year 2003  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Budget Impacts

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Transportation and Infrastructure Committee

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I am Scott Tucker and I serve as Executive Director of the Urban Drainage and Flood Control District in Denver, Colorado. I am also a Board member of the National Association of Flood and Stormwater Management Agencies (NAFSMA) and serve as chairman of its Stormwater Management Committee.

### Background on NAFSMA

NAFSMA represents more than 100 local and state flood control and stormwater management agencies serving a total of more than 76 million citizens and has a strong interest in this important legislation.

NAFSMA's members are public agencies whose function is the protection of lives, property and economic activity from the adverse impacts of storm and flood waters. NAFSMA member activities are also focused on the improvement of the health and quality of our nation's waters. The mission of the association is to advocate public policy, encourage technologies and conduct education programs to facilitate and enhance the achievement of the public service functions of its members. Many of NAFSMA's members are currently involved in ongoing water resources projects with the Corps of Engineers.

Since the organization was formed in 1979, NAFSMA has worked closely with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other federal agencies, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Federal Emergency Management Agency in numerous efforts. Our members have supported the concept of cost sharing as first authorized in WRDA 86 and a group of our members worked closely with the Corps to redesign what is now the Partnership Cooperation Agreement in the early 1990s. We have supported new initiatives such as the Corps Challenge 21 riverine restoration program as a necessary complement and vital tool to add to the Corps ability to meet environmental challenges in their traditional water resource projects.

Although NAFSMA does not take a position on individual Corps-partnered projects, the organization is pleased to provide testimony today to present a picture of some of the impacts of the administration's budget proposals on our members across the country.

### Background on the Urban Drainage and Flood Control District

The Urban Drainage and Flood Control District was established by the Colorado legislature in 1969, for the purpose of assisting local governments in the Denver metropolitan area with multi-jurisdictional drainage and flood control. The District covers an area of 1608 square miles and includes the City and County of Denver, parts of six surrounding counties, including Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Douglas and Jefferson, and all or parts of 33 incorporated cities and towns. There are about 1600 miles of major

drainageways. The present population of the District is approximately 2.2 million people.

### South Platte River –Denver County Reach Environmental Restoration Project

The District is presently working with the United States Army Corps of Engineers on a couple of projects in the Denver metropolitan area that have produced tangible and successful results. In 2000 through a partnership involving the Corps, the District, the City and County of Denver and a local, non-profit organization, The Greenway Foundation, the South Platte River Urban Watershed Restoration Program was launched undertaking two environmental restoration projects on the South Platte River, which serves as the receiving body of water for all the other drainageways in the District.

By July of 2002 the first phase, the Colfax Reach Project, will be completed at a cost of approximately \$3.5 million. The level of cooperation and support provided by the Corps through its Section 1135 environmental restoration program has been outstanding.

We are now underway with the second phase of the South Platte project, the Denver County Reach. Because of the estimated cost of this environmental restoration project (approximately \$18 million) it will require authorization by Congress. The experience of working with the Corps on this next project has again proven to be exceptional. The Reconnaissance and Feasibility study phases have been completed and we are currently awaiting issuance of a Notice of Report Completion. The Corps is a committed and valued partner in development of this project and has proven to be a valuable extension of the federal government.

In the South Platte River corridor, in Denver alone, approximately \$50 million has been spent on improvements by local government, non-profit and private sources and an additional \$7 million has been provided by the federal government toward these efforts. This combined investment of \$57 million has gone a long way toward reducing flood damages, restoring fish and wildlife habitat, improving water quality, enhancing recreational and youth education and increasing river access and enjoyment within a highly urbanized environment.

The proposed cuts in new project funding contained in the Administration's Fiscal Year 2003 budget for the United States Army Corps of Engineers would severely impact the ability to carry out completion of projects like the Denver County Reach Project.

The Denver County Reach is about one half mile in length and is located just west of downtown Denver. This commercial and industrial area of the central city has been undergoing a dramatic revitalization in recent years. The project will provide outstanding benefits with respect to fish and wildlife habitat, flood mitigation and recreation. The central

feature of this phase is environmental restoration through the removal of an instream dam at the Xcel Energy power plant, the installation of an infiltration gallery underneath the streambed to support continuing power plant operations consistent with current practices, and the enhancement of the low flow channel and stream banks, with meanders and jetties as well as native plantings, both upstream and downstream of the dam.

These waterway improvements are vital to improving the local ecosystem and the aquatic and riparian habitat. In addition, the project will improve recreational and educational opportunities for neighboring communities by improving riverbank vegetation, access and safety.

The timing for such cuts could not be worse. Communities in the Denver metropolitan area along with other non-profit and public sector entities, like the Urban Drainage and Flood Control District, have been working effectively together for many years to improve local waterways providing environmental restoration, public recreation and enhanced flood control for the Denver metropolitan area.

The partnership that the local community has developed with the Corps has added a critical element to our ability to complete the Denver County Reach on a timely basis. Funding of the federal portion of this successful partnership must continue in order to meet public safety goals, restore the river's ecosystem and enhance recreational opportunities.

The days of the federal government being asked to assume the sole or majority funding responsibility for local projects are long gone. A new era of the federal government becoming an active partner with local communities is only just beginning. As in our experience with projects in the Denver area, federal agency participation can provide the needed catalyst to help make a local project a reality.

As previously noted, the Denver community has taken a substantial lead in undertaking major improvements on our waterways. With targeted and strategic federal involvement the federal dollars carefully invested in local projects can help local community projects at critical times. This is exactly what is occurring with projects on Denver's South Platte River through our present-day partnership with the United States Army Corps of Engineers.

Without Corps involvement in completing these critical projects on the South Platte River, it would be a number of years before the local community would have the financial capability to complete these projects on its own. Federal agency involvement, like that of the Corps in Denver, can become a national model of how federal agencies can become part of the team to accomplish local projects while meeting national goals.

I urge Congress to continue providing the necessary monies to fund these much-needed

local projects throughout the country by endorsing and participating in the development of effective federal partnering with local communities.

### Other Impacted Flood Reduction Projects

A number of other state and local agencies also have Corps-partnered projects that are in jeopardy under the proposed fiscal year 2003 Corps budget proposals. The following information has been provided by NAFSMA members for inclusion in this testimony.

#### North Dakota Flood Control Projects

There are several flood control projects underway in North Dakota due to historical flooding problems, especially the 1997 flood. These projects are located at Grand Forks, Grafton and Wahpeton. These projects are very important to the State of North Dakota and adequate funding for the expeditious completion of these projects is of high priority for the well being of North Dakota's residents.

Grand Forks: The cities of Grand Forks, North Dakota, and East Grand Forks, Minnesota, suffered tremendous flooding in 1997 which devastated the two communities and caused extreme hardship for all of the residents. In response to that disaster, a large joint flood control project is under construction. The expeditious completion of this flood control project is extremely important to both communities because the land is so flat that the entire metropolitan area of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks is subject to inundation from large floods. The completion of this project could be delayed unless Fiscal Year 2003 funding is increased. The Corps schedule for timely completion of this project requires in excess of \$70 million in Fiscal Year 2003, but only \$30 million is in the President's budget. Both Grand Forks and East Grand Forks are concerned that a delay in project completion subjects the cities to unnecessary flooding risks and could result in substantial increases in flood insurance premiums paid by their residents.

These delays in project completion due to reduction in funding extends unnecessarily the period for recovery of the cities from the devastating effects of the 1997 flood. Funding of this project at the full capability level is extremely important not only to the cities of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks, but also to the State of North Dakota.

Grafton: The City of Grafton, North Dakota, has had a significant flooding problem for several years. Grafton is an important regional center for a large portion of northeastern North Dakota, and virtually the entire city is in the 100-year floodplain. A project is now ready for final design and construction and the Corps requested \$2 million for Fiscal Year 2003. Since this was a new start, no funds were included in the President's budget. It is

very important for Grafton and the State of North Dakota that funds to complete the final design and to initiate construction be provided in the 2003 budget.

Wahpeton: Although funds are included in the Fiscal Year 2003 budget for a flood control project at Wahpeton, North Dakota, no funds were included for the flood control project at Breckenridge, Minnesota. Since these cities are directly across the Red River from each other, the projects need to be constructed together. Building only the Wahpeton side could increase flood levels in Breckenridge. It is extremely important that funding be provided to the Breckenridge, Minnesota project in Fiscal Year 2003 to assure that flood control efforts at both Wahpeton and Breckenridge continue.

### Reclamation Board of the State of California Corps-Partnered Projects

The Reclamation Board of the State of California was created by the California Legislature in 1911 to carry out a comprehensive flood control plan for the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers of the great Central Valley of California. This valley drains over 43,000 square miles. The Reclamation Board was one of the first non-federal sponsors to cooperate with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in controlling flooding and protecting the public from the associated damages. Today, the Board continues working with the Corps on approximately 40 studies or projects in protecting the public and takes this opportunity to highlight four key projects that require additional Corps support.

The Sacramento and San Joaquin River Basins Comprehensive Study – In January, 1997, California experienced one of the most geographically extensive and costly flood disasters in the State's history. If not for the past State and federal flood management projects flood damages could have exceeded 20 billion dollars. As a result of the flood, the U.S. Congress and California State Legislature authorized the Sacramento and San Joaquin River Basins Comprehensive Study to develop a Comprehensive Plan to reduce flood damages while integrating ecosystem restoration. This is one of the largest studies presently undertaken by the Corps and is second only to the Florida Everglades Project.

The Board and the Corps are now drafting a Comprehensive Plan for phased development and implementation of flood damage reduction improvements, and ecosystem restoration elements. The first phase elements in projects of the Plan must be funded by Congress to provide immediate increased flood protection for the Central Valley and ensure coordinated implementation with the CALFED Bay Delta Program.

Yuba River Basin Flood Control Project: In 1997, four lives were lost, 3,500 homes and businesses damaged, and 26,700 acres of lands inundated. The flood demonstrated that this Project has one of the highest needs for a flood control Project in the Central Valley that is ready for construction. This 28 million-dollar project was authorized by WRDA in 1999. The State of California through the Board has appropriated \$4.6 million for con-

struction and this appropriation will likely be lost if construction is not started in fiscal year 2003 because the State's ability to spend this money expires. Also, timely re-appropriation of this money would be unlikely because of California's severe budget crisis.

All non-federal funding and authorizations are in place. All federal authorizations are in place. Without the needed federal funds initial construction for flood protection for the Yuba River Basin will not move forward.

**Tule River Success Reservoir Enlargement:** This Project will raise Success Dam spillway by 10 feet to increase the level of flood protection for the City of Porterville from 1 in 47 years to 1 in 100 years. The project has Federal and State authorization. Non-federal funding is available. Congress funded a new start for 2002, however, no funding is being recommended in the Corps proposed budget for 2003. Continued federal funding is needed to ensure that construction, once initiated using 2002 funds, will not be halted. Non-federal matching funds are being requested in California's fiscal year 2002 – 03 budget.

**South Sacramento County Streams Project:** This Project will increase the level of flood protection for the urbanized area in South Sacramento. The benefit to cost ratio of this project is 3.8 to 1. The Project was authorized WRDA in 1999. The non-federal authorization was completed in September 2000. Non-federal funding is in place. The federal share is needed for this critical flood protection project to move forward.

The Reclamation Board is placing a high priority on public safety as demonstrated by the above projects and funding availability. We respectfully request Congress consider providing their matching cost share so that we may jointly move forward in protecting residents of the great Central Valley of California.

### Pima County, Arizona

**Tucson Drainage Area (Tucson Arroyo):** This is an ongoing project for flood damage reduction, environmental restoration and recreation previously authorized for construction under WRDA 99. The Corps, in cooperation with Pima County Flood Control and the City of Tucson, constructed flood control detention basins at Randolph Park as the first phase of the project. The second and final phase calls for the Corps to construct the remaining detention basin improvements to protect urban neighborhoods and the City's downtown financial area from the threat of devastating hundred-year flood. Without federal funding for general construction, this much needed project cannot move forward.

These projects represent only a sampling of critical flood protection projects placed in jeopardy under the administration's proposed budget for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in fiscal year 2003.

NAFSMA is aware that flood control measures are a necessary investment required to prevent loss of life and damages to people's homes and businesses. Flood control is a wise investment that will pay for itself by preserving life and property and reducing the probability of repeatedly asking the federal government for disaster assistance. Therefore, when balancing the federal budget, a thorough analysis would prove that there is substantial future federal savings in disaster assistance that supports sufficient appropriations through the Civil Works Budget.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We would be pleased to provide you with additional contact information on any of the projects identified in this testimony.